

**Statement of Doug Smith, Chairman
on behalf of the
Board of County Commissioners
Martin County, Florida
to the
Subcommittee on Water Resources and the
Environment
House Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
July 22, 2004**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting the testimony of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners. With me are the Vice Chair of the Board, Sarah Heard, Commissioner Michael DiTerlizzi, and County Water Quality Chief Gary Roderick. We have come to Washington three times this spring to attend important meetings involving the Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL-S) project. We are delighted to have such opportunities to explain why IRL-S is so important to the residents of Martin County and surrounding areas and why it is an integral part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. We also support authorization of the Southern Golden Gate Estates project at the earliest possible date.

We are grateful for the strong support and leadership of the Florida Congressional Delegation, especially Representatives Mark Foley, Mario Diaz-Balart and Alcee Hastings and Senators Bob Graham and Bill Nelson.

The citizens of our county, and indeed Everglades restoration itself, have waited long enough. The road to the present started back in 1992 when initial planning began on an Indian River Lagoon project. The plans have been altered in many respects over the years. During that period, a marvelous cooperative relationship emerged between the Federal government, the State of Florida and local entities—especially Martin County. Now at last we have a project that is much improved and ready for final authorization. Additional delay in approving this project can only mean additional cost and an unfortunate setback for Everglades restoration. We strongly support Senate passage this year of a Water Resources Development Act that includes IRL-S, and we respectfully urge you to support making this vital project a part of the final legislation.

Indian River Lagoon-South and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

The Water Resources Development Act of 2000 designated the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) to be the framework for changes to the Central and Southern Florida Project that are necessary to “restore, preserve, and protect the South Florida ecosystem...”

That legislation specified that the South Florida ecosystem includes the land and water within the boundary of the South Florida Water Management District in effect on July 1, 1999. The area included in IRL-S clearly is within these boundaries. IRL-S is an integral part of the Everglades ecosystem and will protect the most biologically diverse estuary system in North America. It will restore habitat for more than 4,300 species of plants and animals. It will help to meet the water quality goals of Lake Okeechobee, which will have a positive affect on areas below the Lake. IRL-S can supply a substantial amount of clean freshwater, that can be delivered to Lake Okeechobee and areas further south in the Everglades ecosystem.

Statements that IRL-S should be considered apart from Everglades restoration are misplaced.

The Present Crisis

IRL-S is the first component of CERP to seek authorization. It includes elements in Martin, St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties in the area east of Lake Okeechobee.

The location of the Indian River Lagoon estuary at the merging point of cool and warm waters along the Atlantic Ocean gives rise to the most biologically diverse estuary in North America.

This critical area faces disaster due to efforts decades ago to drain the Everglades. Man’s construction of endless canals and barriers changed the traditional north to south flow of the Everglades to the unnatural shunting of water eastward and westward to sea—some 1.7 billion gallons of fresh water a day lost to tide. As a result of this rerouting of water, the Indian River Lagoon system has been subjected to unnatural levels of freshwater, upsetting the fresh water/salt water balance, causing severe damage.

In the winter and spring of 1998, El Nino rains in central and south Florida filled Lake Okeechobee to levels that threatened the integrity of the Herbert Hoover Dike and required maximum discharges through the C-44 canal into the St. Lucie River. The St. Lucie River was greatly impacted by drastic decreases in salinity.

During this time of heavy discharges, hundreds of calls to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) were logged reporting more than 33 species of fish found with lesions in the St. Lucie Estuary. Over 450 fish were sent to the DEP Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) for analysis. Historically, prolonged low salinity in the St. Lucie estuary has been associated with an increase in numbers of fish with lesions. Scientists at FMRI have determined that a bloom of a freshwater-tolerant fungus, called *Aphanomyces invadans*, was attributed to the fresh water discharges from Lake Okeechobee and was the probable cause of the lesions.

Recent studies show that 33 % of estuary dolphins and 55% of sea turtles are inflicted with tumors, lesions and ulcers. Some species of fish no longer reproduce in the estuary.

As the discharged fresh water races into the St. Lucie River, the Indian River Lagoon and finally the Atlantic Ocean, its velocity is like that of whitewater rapids—except its color is an ugly brown. The discharges deposit useless muck that suffocates everything it covers, including oyster beds and fish habitat. When the discharges are underway, an ugly plume can be seen extending for miles into the Atlantic.

The economy of our area depends on the health of our waterways and the species that thrive there. The city of Stuart, the Martin County seat, is known as the sailfish capital of the world. Tourism and sport fishing are our lifeblood. They contribute \$730 million dollars to our economy annually. Some 7,000 jobs in our area depend on a healthy estuary. Yet whenever the powers that govern the level of Lake Okeechobee order the level of the lake lowered, our economy grinds to a standstill.

For years we have witnessed the decline of a wonderful natural system. Now CERP has given us hope that we can save our estuary and our economy.

Description of the Project

The recommended plan consists of five components:

- **Reservoirs.** Construction and operation of four above ground freshwater storage reservoirs (130,000 acre feet of storage), and their connecting canals, control structures, levees and pumps would capture and release water from the C-44, C-23, C-24, and C-25 canals. These canals are located in Martin and St. Lucie counties, Florida. This component will reduce the storage demands on Lake Okeechobee and control fresh water discharges to the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon.
- **Stormwater Treatment Areas.** Construction and operation of stormwater treatment areas would treat freshwater discharges from the canals and provide for nutrient reduction.
- **Natural Storage and Treatment Areas and North Fork Floodplain Restoration.** Natural storage areas (over 90,000 acres of wetlands) would be acquired for freshwater storage and treatment. Onsite storage would also recharge

the aquifer with freshwater. The North Fork Floodplain Restoration would allow for additional flow using a northern diversion.

- **Water Diversion.** Diversion of existing flows to provide more freshwater discharge locations such as mentioned above, rather than the large rainy season freshwater flows to the St. Lucie River Middle Estuary of recent years.
- **Muck Removal and Habitat Improvement.** Removal of 7.9 million cubic yards of muck from four dead zones located in the North and South Forks of the St. Lucie River, as well as the Middle Estuary, of the St. Lucie River.

Project benefits include:

- Reduction in the frequency of damaging freshwater discharges to St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon.
- Improvement of the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of water deliveries to the St. Lucie River and Estuary, Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee.
- Restoration of historical natural wetland-upland mosaic systems to preserve, protect and increase the spatial extent and quality of wetlands.
- Increased environmental and agricultural water supply.
- Improved economic viability of commercial fishery and recreational opportunities that are dependant on a healthy river and estuary.

Why IRL-S Needs Authorization Now

The Everglades watershed is broken and in dire need of repair. A watershed cannot be fixed by trying to modify its discharge point. The process must begin upstream. The Kissimmee Basin restoration at the top of the Everglades watershed is well underway. The next watershed basins south of the Kissimmee River basin with a recommended plan and Project Implementation Report is the IRL-S portion of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The IRL-S is the next logical step in the Everglades restoration process. The IRL-S portion of the CERP complements the Everglades restoration efforts already underway.

North America's most biologically diverse estuary is under immediate threat. The problem of massive discharges from Lake Okeechobee loom constantly. This project would address the problem of the discharges. If it is delayed, the discharges will continue to eat away at our estuary and our economy. No other area of the Everglades is more directly threatened than our estuary. Therefore it is most appropriate the IRL-S is the first CERP project to seek authorization.

The land needed for IRL-S is available now. It may not be available for long. Our area is being developed at a rapid rate. Over 30,000 acres of land, or approximately 25% of the land needed for the project, have been purchased by the state. Martin County is proud to have assisted in these purchases. If IRL-S is not authorized this year, we must wait until the next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), and Congress might not pass another WRDA for years. In the meantime, the needed land could be purchased by developers, becoming lost to the natural system forever. At the least, land prices will continue to rise. In our area, recent land prices have increased at a rate of 20% within the

last two years. Delay translates into increased costs and can eventually threaten the unity behind the project that exists today.

A delay of IRL-S could well delay the CERP projects that follow. The Everglades can scarcely afford more delay in restoration.

IRL-S will restore and protect over 90,000 acres of wetlands. The President recognizes the great contributions of our nation's wetlands. This April, in his Earth Day speech, the President announced an initiative to restore three million acres of wetlands over the next five years. Upon learning of the President's bold initiative, I wrote to the President, on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners, and congratulated him on his recognition of the value of preserving the nation's wetlands. The letter also pointed out how IRL-S would contribute to his initiative and urged him to ask Congress to authorize IRL-S this year. That letter to the President is attached to this statement.

Delaying IRL-S will risk losing the very types of vital wetlands the President wants to preserve.

Unprecedented Unity for IRL-S Authorization

In 1998 and 2003 after fresh water discharges from the Central and South Florida Project Canal basin discharges and Lake Okeechobee discharges, citizens voicing outrage for the impacts to the ecosystem signed over 50,000 petitions. On September 27, 2003, approximately one thousand area citizens held a rally at the S-80 discharge structure to voice their concern about the Lake Okeechobee discharges and their unanimous support for the IRL-S portion of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

The IRL-S portion of the CERP has been in the planning stages for over six years. Public participation has been a big part of the process, from citizens contributing on the Project Development Teams to local grass root organizations meeting regularly to stay informed and offering any assistance to the Everglades effort. Locally, groups such as the Rivers Coalition and the St. Lucie River Initiative, which represent over 100,000 business, agricultural, marine, environmental, sports, recreation, and local resident interests, have worked diligently for years to raise awareness and organize the community for a common purpose with a common goal.

The water level in Lake Okeechobee is too high, Florida Bay and the Everglades are not receiving enough good quality fresh water, and the Caloosahatchee River and the St. Lucie River are receiving too much fresh water. The solution to saving Lake Okeechobee, Florida Bay and the Everglades is the same as the solution to saving the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries. That solution is to provide more storage in basins surrounding Lake Okeechobee, sending less high volume discharges to the estuaries and sending more clean treated water south to the Everglades and Florida Bay.

In 2002 and again in 2004 the IRL-S CERP plan was presented by the Corps of Engineers at local meetings that were attended by hundreds of local area residents. So many

citizens were in attendance that the Corps representatives commented that they had rarely seen so much public interest and participation. The Corps has also been impressed by the overwhelming positive public response to the recommended plan.

The South Atlantic District Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed a process for an independent scientific review to be a mandatory step prior to transmittal of the Feasibility Study and Project Implementation Report. The purpose of the independent scientific review was to ensure that the plans presented in the analysis meet the restoration objectives and that the plan formulation and that project benefits are supported by sound science. The panelists were selected based on their broad range of backgrounds in scientific, engineering, and planning expertise in estuaries, wetlands, groundwater, sediment, nutrients, and water resources. It was the opinion of this review panel that the plans presented in the IRL-S Plan Implementation Report have a high likelihood of meeting the restoration objectives and that the supporting technical analyses was based upon sound science. A copy of the letter from this panel to Corps District Engineer, Col. Robert Carpenter, is attached.

The citizens participation in the development of the plan and in the development of the components of the IRL-S portion of the CERP helped bring about reasonable compromise and consensus.

Local area support does not end with just a thank you. In 1998, the citizens of Martin County voted for a three year, one cent sales tax to contribute to the IRL-S plan effort. The tax was in effect from 1999 to 2001 and raised over \$50 million in revenue. Some \$26 million dollars has been spent to date, and the funding is being leveraged with partnerships from other funding sources, such as the Wetland Reserve Program, to maximize CERP land purchases in the most efficient and effective manner.

This local funding contribution puts a unique twist on the traditional Federal/State partnerships. It demonstrates commitment and support for the recommended IRL-S CERP component by the area citizens who are willing to take ownership in the recommended plan. The local funding contribution has also allowed the State of Florida to accelerate its efforts on elements of the project. The state of Florida, like Martin County, is putting its money into the project up front to accelerate project components.

The common goal of Everglades restoration, merged with citizen involvement, intergovernmental coordination, independent scientific review, and local ownership in the development of a sound plan that meets its restoration objectives, has led to virtually unanimous support for the project.

Attached is a list of governmental and private entities that have adopted resolutions of support.

I have also attached to this statement a letter sent to Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) John Paul Woodley, Jr., by the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. The letter endorses the IRL-S project and urges the Army to complete the Project

Implementation Report process as expeditiously as possible. The Task Force was created by the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 for the purpose of coordinating Everglades restoration efforts. Its membership is composed of representatives of Federal, State, Tribal and Local governmental bodies. The strong support of this distinguished group is significant. No group is more knowledgeable on matters of Everglades restoration.

We were honored that the Task Force had its most recent meeting in May in Martin County, and its members had the opportunity to visit the Indian River Lagoon area.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to speak for my colleagues on the Martin County Commission. I am even more honored to speak for the residents of our great County. We, the citizens of Martin County, have invested our personal resources in this project. We do not come to this Subcommittee asking for a handout. Indeed we are asking for the Congress to authorize what we have already endorsed with our contributions. Indian River Lagoon-South is a part of our lives. We have participated in every step of the way in its planning. We have worked in endless planning sessions as the Project Implementation Report process moved ahead. We have worked with all interest groups to forge a consensus behind this bold and unique CERP project. We have held rallies and enlisted the support of every county in South Florida, numerous other governmental entities and private organizations.

We pledge to continue to work as IRL-S is put into the ground. We have benefited from living in an area flush with the wonders of the Everglades ecosystem, and we have recognized our solemn duty to preserve this marvelous asset for future generations. Now we ask you to do the same. Please take this first step by authorizing the Indian River Lagoon- South Project this year. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan holds great promise for restoring the magnificent Everglades. It will be a long journey to achieve this great promise. But this journey, as worthy as it is, cannot begin without taking this first step.

Thank you.

Doug Smith, Chairman
Martin County, Florida, Board of County Commissioners
2401 S.E. Monterey Road
Stuart, Florida 34996

772 288-5400

Local Contact in Washington, DC
Fowler West
The Washington Group
1401 K St., NW
10th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
202 789-2111

The statement for the Subcommittee hearing on July 22, 2004, urges prompt authorization of the Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL-S) component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

The statement describes:

- The relationship for IRL-S to CERP
- The present crisis in the Martin County area
- A description of IRL-S
- Why IRL-S needs to be authorized at the earliest possible time
- The unity behind authorizing IRL-S

**ATTACHMENTS
TO THE
STATEMENT OF DOUG SMITH, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA
before the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND THE
ENVIRONMENT**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

July 22, 2004

Letter from Chairman Doug Smith to the President—April 29, 2004

*Letter from Independent Scientific Review Panel to Col. Robert Carpenter, District
Engineer, US Corps of Engineers—May 3, 2004*

List of Organizations Endorsing IRL-S Project

*May 4, 2004, Letter from the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force to
Assistant Secretary of the Army John Paul Woodley*

Martin County Pictorial on IRL-S



MARTIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
2401 S.E. MONTEREY ROAD • STUART, FL 34996

DOUG SMITH
Commissioner, District 1

SUSAN L. VALLIERE
Commissioner, District 2

LEE WEBERMAN
Commissioner, District 3

SARAH HEARD
Commissioner, District 4

MICHAEL DITERLIZZI
Commissioner, District 5

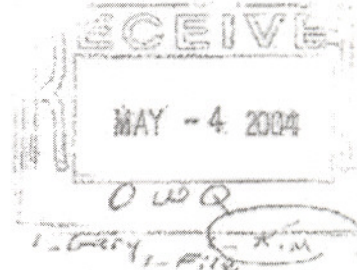
RUSS BLACKBURN
County Administrator

STEPHEN FRY
County Attorney

April 29, 2004

Telephone: 772-221-2369
Fax: 772-288-5432
File: chr041.151.aw

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500



Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Martin County Board of County Commissioners, we greatly appreciate your strong support of the restoration of America's Everglades. You and Governor Jeb Bush have made the Everglades the centerpiece of your respective environmental agendas.

Martin County, Florida is the site of the first project under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the Indian River Lagoon South (IRLS), which needs Congressional authorization. It includes most of the elements involved in the entire Everglades restoration plan embodied in CERP.

We, the County Commissioners, want you to know that the citizens of Martin County and surrounding jurisdictions strongly support this project. IRLS also has the support of all environmental and business groups in the area. To demonstrate their support, the citizens of Martin County have willingly contributed, through a tax referendum, nearly \$50 million to purchase land needed for the project.

We applaud your Earth Day announcement that your Administration will create, improve and protect some three million acres of wetlands over the next five years. This is a noble agenda that will benefit all Americans, and we want to be a part of your effort.

We believe that the IRLS project can be a great boost to your new Wetlands Initiative. It is in the final stages of preparation for Congressional authorization, and it must be authorized this year in order for Everglades restoration to avoid a major delay. This one Everglades project would protect, improve and create some 92,000 acres of wetlands in an area that is rapidly developing. Authorization of the IRLS this year could contribute substantially to your Wetlands Initiative.

TELEPHONE
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WEB ADDRESS
<http://www.martin.fl.us>

However, without IRLS, this massive wetlands opportunity will be lost forever. In South Florida, roughly fifty percent of the pre-drainage wetland area and ninety percent of pinelands have been lost to development. The IRLS project provides a unique opportunity for rehydration and habitat restoration due to the current availability of large tracts of land.

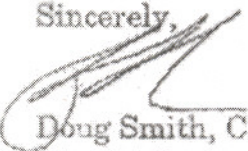
The IRLS project will help meet the system-wide CERP goal of increasing such wetland restoration and improving wildlife habitat that may be more difficult, if not impossible, to do in the more populated areas to the south. Among the many species of birds for which the Everglades is noted are the federally listed endangered Wood Stork (sometimes referred to as the Wood Ibis), the Snail Kite, the threatened Audubon's Crested Caracara and the state listed Sandhill Crane. The approximately 92,000 acres of wetlands created and protected by the IRLS project will make many favorable breeding colony locations for these important birds.

The fact that land is available now is an incentive to move quickly since land values in our area of Florida have doubled in the last year. About a third of the needed land has been acquired. Delay will translate into great cost increases.

Mr. President, we respectfully request that you indicate to Congress your support for the authorization of the IRLS project this year. Favorable action by the Congress will serve to move implementation of CERP forward and ensure great progress toward the goals of your new Wetlands Initiative.

Again, we congratulate you on your strong support for restoring the Everglades and for your Earth Day announcement on increasing the nation's wetlands.

Sincerely,



Doug Smith, Chairman

Martin County Board of County Commissioners

DS/kl/kp

cc: Martin County Board of County Commissioners
Martin County Administration
✓ Office of Water Quality
Fowler West, The Washington Group

JOHN J BURNS

May 3, 2004

Colonel Robert M. Carpenter
Commander and District Engineer
U.S. Army Engineer District, Jacksonville
P.O. Box 4970
701 San Marco Blvd.
Jacksonville, Florida. 32232-0019

Dear Colonel Carpenter:

Enclosed is the final report of the Indian River Lagoon – South Independent Scientific Review Panel. The Panel is delighted to have had the opportunity to review the Indian River Lagoon – South Project Implementation Report. We are hopeful that our expedited review of this important and complex project will be useful to you as you proceed with the project.

The Project Implementation Report stands as an impressive document that addresses a substantial number of issues with an obvious concern for achieving public goals and legislated directives. The team that created the Report, as well as those individuals responsible for integrating the pieces into a coherent whole should be highly commended for their efforts. It is the opinion of this review panel that the plans presented in the Report have a high likelihood of meeting the restoration objectives and that the supporting technical analyses are based upon sound science. There are considerable uncertainties inherent to a project of this complexity. Therefore, the panel has made recommendations for additional detailed analyses as this project is implemented. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to be part of this important undertaking and hope that our review will have added value to the process.

Please feel free to contact me or other members of the Panel if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



John J. Burns
Chairman
Indian River Lagoon – South
Independent Scientific Review Panel

Enclosure

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E-MAIL: JOHNBURNS1@COX.NET

**ENDORSEMENTS
OF THE
INDIAN RIVER LAGOON SOUTH PROJECT**

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE
AND ST. LUCIE AND CALOOSAHOATCHEE ESTUARIES
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CHAMBER SOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
GREATER MIAMI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
SOUTH BEACH AND GREATER MIAMI HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
FLORIDA STATE CONFERENCE OF NAACP BRANCHES
AUDUBON OF FLORIDA
DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE
ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND USE LAW CENTER
THE EVERGLADES FOUNDATION
THE EVERGLADES TRUST
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL
1000 FRIENDS OF FLORIDA
SIERRA CLUB
WORLD WILDLIFE FUND
NORTHEAST DADE COALITION
DAY CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC.**

SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TASK FORCE

Office of the Executive Director

May 4, 2004

John Paul Woodley, Jr.
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon, Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Mr. Woodley:

I am writing to convey the unanimous support of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force for the expeditious completion of the Corps of Engineers' Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL) Project Implementation Report (PIR). As you know the intergovernmental South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was established by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 and the membership includes representatives from the key local, Tribal, State and Federal entities who are collaborating on the implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), as well as other projects intended to restore the Everglades.

The Task Force strongly believes that implementing CERP in a manner that ensures achievement of natural system restoration goals, while also providing for the other water related needs of the region is essential to restoring the South Florida ecosystem. Because of the importance of implementing CERP, we believe that it is critical to maintain the momentum that began in December 2000 when Congress authorized the initial CERP projects. As a result, we support the expeditious completion of the public process for the IRL project.

The project recommends corrective actions intended to provide a more natural annual freshwater flow, while maintaining the current level of flood protection and freshwater supplies for the Indian River region. The project is anticipated to reduce the amount of water going to tide by providing both natural and reservoir storage. That storage will improve water quality; provide water to enhance the natural sheet flow to the remaining Everglades; and provide water for agricultural and other uses. The project will also improve the water quality in Lake Okeechobee and increase wetlands to provide habitat for native species, including many that are endangered.

The plan represents the necessary first step for the recovery of the natural resources of the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon, which have been damaged by unnatural releases and excessive volumes of stormwater from Lake Okeechobee that have been released to tide. In addition to the natural system benefits, the plan also provides significant benefits for agricultural and economic interests, both of which support the project.

SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION TASK FORCE

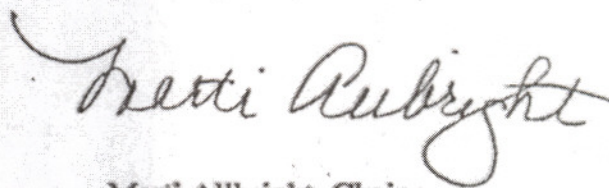
Office of the Executive Director

As noted above, this plan has an unprecedented level of support from all stakeholder groups, including area businesses, agricultural interests, local civic organizations, local governmental bodies, environmental groups, and, of course, the State of Florida. A letter to Florida's Congressional Delegation from Ms. Colleen Castille, Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, strongly supporting Congressional authorization for IRL this year is enclosed.

Local governments are doing their part as well and Martin County has provided significant financial resources to implement this project. To date, the County has raised over fifty (50) million dollars from Martin County citizens to purchase the necessary lands upon which the project features will be built.

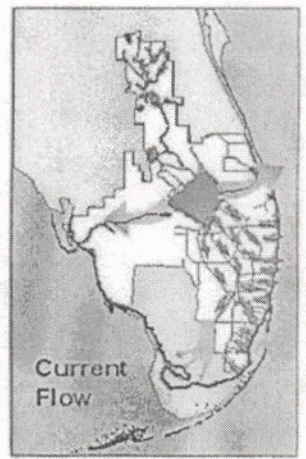
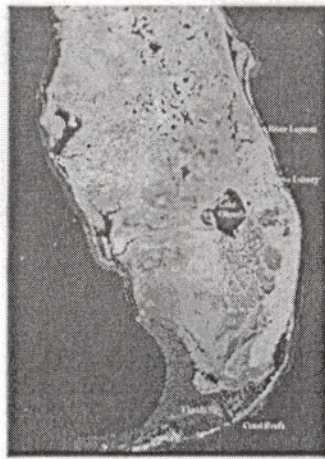
The Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District are to be commended for shepherding this project through the detailed planning stage. We respectfully urge your support to promptly complete the public process for the IRL project. The Task Force stands ready to assist you in any way that we can and we appreciate the Administration's support for our Everglades restoration efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marti Allbright". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Marti Allbright, Chair
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration
Task Force

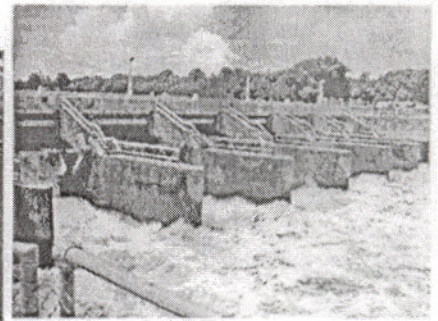
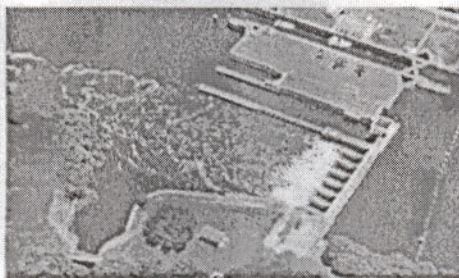
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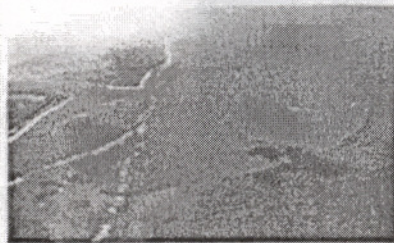
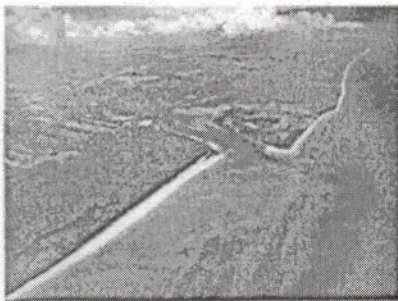
- ✱ Historic Flow - Kissimmee River valley, Lake Okeechobee & the Everglades "River of Grass"
- ✱ Current Flow - 1.7 Billion Gallons Per Day Freshwater wasted to the Atlantic Ocean & Gulf of Mexico, polluting ecosystems on the way.



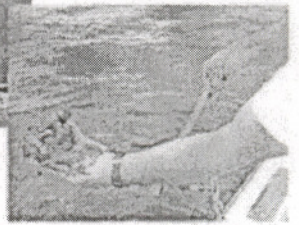
Discharge From S-80 Structure



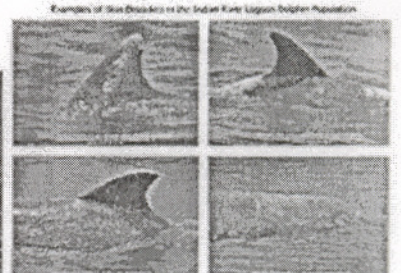
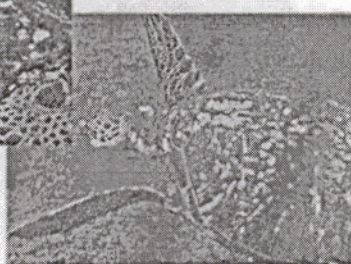
- ✱ Indian River Lagoon & St. Lucie Estuary—Most biodiverse ecosystem in North America
- ✱ Discharges have exceeded 4.5 billion gallons per day polluted freshwater.



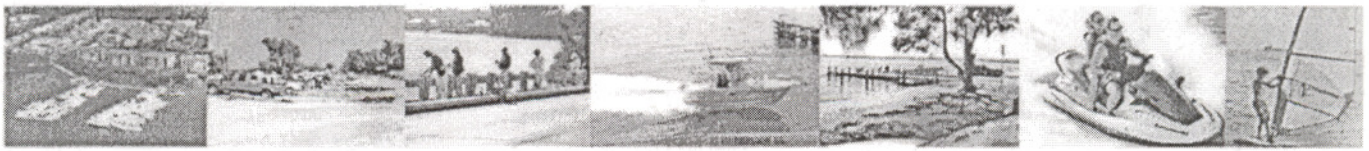
Silt Plume During Discharge



- ✱ Seagrass habitat, Oyster Bars, Mangrove marshes and nearshore reefs all affected by discharges.
- ✱ Up to 598 cubic yards per day of silt during discharge events turns into 6-8 ft. deep anaerobic muck bottom.

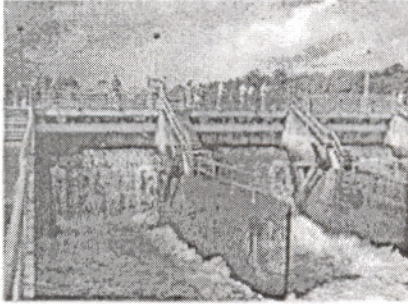


- ✱ Over 30 species of fish found with lesions during 8 major discharge events since 1980. Sea Turtles (55%) with fibropapillomatosis, and Bottlenose Dolphin (33%) with Pox virus and lobomycosis now appear in greater numbers in the Indian River Lagoon.

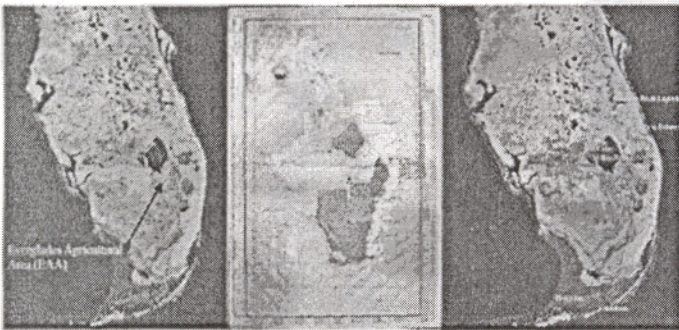


The Environment IS the Economy in the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon

- ✱ Supporting an annual economic impact of \$730 Million, over 7,000 jobs and \$588 Million in waterfront property values in Martin County alone.
- ✱ State of Florida committed \$100 million per year to CERP and funded 96 regional projects totaling \$57 million (50% local matching).
- ✱ Martin County raised \$50 million in 3 yr special sales tax for non-federal share and purchased \$113 million of lands for IRL Plan so far.



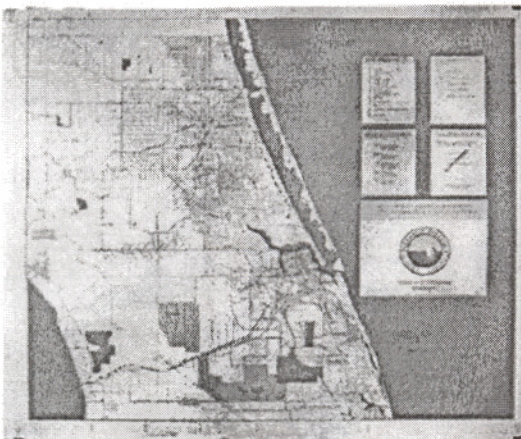
- ✱ Rally for The Rivers - Sept. 27, 2003 - 965 people, Real People & Real Signatures - 40,000 ('98), 10,000 ('03) 50,000 people who want to see some action by their political leaders.



What Should Be Done

- ✱ Restore the Kissimmee River back to its natural floodplain.
- ✱ Revise Upper Chain of Lakes & Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule to Lower Levels.

- ✱ The Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) - Sugar Cane - blocks the "River of Grass" - Redirect surface water flow through the EAA and Restore the River of Grass for the restoration of the Everglades.



- ✱ The Central and South Florida (C&SF) Project, constructed in the 1950's, diverts surface waters into canals from agricultural areas. These canals divert the water into the St. Lucie Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon.



- Indian River Lagoon South Recommended Plan**
- C-44 Basin Components**
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- C-35 Northfork and Southfork Basin Components**
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- ✱ Move forward with the Indian River Lagoon South Plan, two components of CERP. \$ 1.2 billion (50/50 federal/non-federal).